



# SMART GROWTH CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

976 OSOS STREET • ROOM 300 • SAN LUIS OBISPO • CALIFORNIA 93408 • (805) 781-5600

*Promoting the Wise Use of Land • Helping to Build Great Communities*

“Smart growth is the way to grow the economy, preserve the environment and have healthy communities without sacrificing the quality of life for future generations. Smart growth is the planning side of sustainable development.” Christine Todd Whitman, Chief Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, former Governor of New Jersey.

There is a growing call for new tools to help deal with the challenges will be confronting us as a region over the next several decades. We face a serious shortage of affordable workforce housing, our economic strength is threatened, our major roadways are becoming more congested, and our open space and natural resources are threatened by continued sprawl into rural areas. On June 7, 2005 the Board of Supervisors endorsed the “Guiding Principles of Smart Growth”. The Board endorsed these principles “with the intent of engaging in implementing actions, programs and projects to succeed in achieving the principles.” Since that time, widespread acceptance and implementation of these principles is occurring and the term “Smart Growth” is becoming accepted vernacular for decision-makers as they review projects.

The term “Smart Growth” was coined by the State of Maryland in 1990 to guide governance that respects and coordinates economics, the environment and social equity (the three “E’s”), to create sustainable growth. The concept of sustainability has risen from Native American cultures as an important governing principle itself, which is to aim to meet the needs of current generations without compromising future generations’ ability to meet their own needs, that is to think long term in decision-making. The United States Environmental Protection Agency endorses and promotes Smart Growth as a way of bringing together traditionally opposing interests to improve community quality of life while at the same time improving the environment and the economy.

Smart Growth principles address current development patterns that are often dominated by what many call “sprawl,” or low density, automobile-oriented development. Typical land development policies and ordinances are often at odds with Smart Growth. It is becoming clear that these patterns are no longer in the long-term interest of our communities, cities, suburbs, and agricultural areas. In response, Smart Growth policies draw upon the successful models of the past and present, and plan for growth that will more successfully serve the present and future population.

One action that implements the concept of Smart Growth is a priority processing system for Smart Growth-rated projects. This system is being prepared as a pilot program by county Planning staff. It allows expedited processing of land use, land division and building permits for projects that include features attributed to Smart Growth principles. Attached are draft criteria that projects would be evaluated against to determine if projects possess Smart Growth principles and therefore qualify for priority processing. Projects that qualify for expedited processing will not receive any less scrutiny for compliance with land use or environmental regulations. Examples of Smart Growth principles include developments that contain a variety of smaller and standard lot sizes with large common open areas, internal connectivity, densities that achieve intended zoning standards, smaller home sizes and close proximity to transit routes, shopping and other services.

The projects that qualify for expedited processing are those that give priority for resources and services to compact, life-enriching, healthy neighborhoods and commercial development, compared to low-density development that sprawls all over the rural areas of our county.

### **Draft Smart Growth Criteria for Priority Processing**

**In addition to acquiring the required number of points detailed on the following pages, each development must have the following characteristics in order to qualify for priority processing:**

- ☐ Within a Urban Reserve Line or Village Reserve Line served by community water and sewer
- ☐ Provides for logical, attractive and safe pedestrian circulation within the site - At minimum, all units have direct access to common open area (where applicable) and commercial areas (where applicable) via pedestrian route where automobile access has minimum impact on the pedestrian experience (ie, not via a driveway)
- ☐ Provides for logical, attractive and safe pedestrian and bicycle connections from the site to adjacent facilities - At minimum, all units connect to nearby parks, open space, public streets, transit stop, and/or commercial area (where applicable) via pedestrian route, automobile access has minimum impact on the pedestrian experience (ie, not via a driveway), and there are pedestrian links between the end of cul-de-sacs and an adjacent cul-de-sac or between a cul-de-sac and larger pathway system.
- ☐ Development protects, preserves, and/or restores important on-site natural features where applicable (i.e. wetlands, riparian corridors, watersheds, steep slopes, oak trees). Development buffers on and off-site natural features. \* Must be shown on plans

In order to qualify for priority processing, all projects within the Residential Single Family, Residential Multi-Family, Commercial Retail, or Office/Professional land use categories must incorporate the following essential components of Smart Growth development. Please explain how your project meets each of the following:

- ☐ Buildings are arranged to provide usable and easily accessible private outdoor living spaces. Please explain:
- ☐ Buildings are arranged to provide usable and centrally located common areas. Please explain:
- ☐ Building arrangement also maximizes the use of natural lighting, solar access and to the extent feasible implements sustainable site drainage concepts. Please explain:
- ☐ Buildings exhibit high quality architectural design consistent with local community design plans if applicable and take into account the neighborhood context in terms of building scale, style and site planning. Please explain:
- ☐ Building design reflects local historic building type in the community. Please explain:
- ☐ Treatment of façade breaks down massing, articulates depth, and defines the street edge for pedestrians. Please explain:

Scale and mass of buildings relate to neighborhood. Please explain:

**All projects within the Residential Single Family land use category must incorporate project characteristics in order to achieve at least 12 points.**

<i>Possible Points</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Points Earned</i>
2	Project is within ¼ mile walking distance of any of the following: food/convenience store, retail/services, schools, daycare, recreation centers	
1	Project is located within ¼ mile walking distance of an existing transit stop or proposes a transit stop	
3	All lots of 6,000 square feet or larger provide for secondary dwellings	
3	Average lot size is 4,000 square feet or less	
3	Common area is provided at a minimum of 200 square feet per unit consisting of tables, benches, and shade provided by structures or landscaping	
2	At least 75% of garages are located at least five feet behind the front of the house	
3	15% of units are very low or low income affordable; or 20% of units are moderate income affordable; or 30% of units are middle income affordable	
1	Setbacks are varied on the street. Each group of three adjacent houses contain at least one house whose front yard setback differs from those of its neighbors by a minimum of 5 feet.	
1	All buildings with street frontage shall face the street with visible entrances.	
1	Creates a continuation of the existing neighborhood. Development provides a series of through street connections within the site that connect to other through streets in the surrounding area.	
2	Streets continue the existing grid pattern of the neighborhood.	
1	All new streets are the minimum allowable width	
1	Solar access considered in the site design (quantify – Templeton, countywide design)	
1	Site design maximizes solar access to all buildings.	
1	Exceeds California Energy Code by at least 20%	
1	All landscaping is irrigated through drip irrigation.	
1	All pedestrian walkways are landscaped and illuminated with pedestrian scaled elements.	
<b>TOTAL</b>		

**All projects within the Residential Multi-Family land use category must incorporate project characteristics in order to achieve at least 15 points.**

<i>Possible Points</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Points Earned</i>
	<b>Must provide one of the following:</b>	
3	Density greater than or equal to 20 units/useable acre; or	
3	Density greater than or equal to 90 percent of the maximum density allowed by ordinance; or	
2	Density greater than or equal to 15 units/ gross acre	
2	Project is within ¼ mile walking distance of any of the following: food/convenience store, retail/services, schools, daycare, recreation centers	
1	Project is located within ¼ mile walking distance of an existing transit stop or proposes a transit stop	
2	Provides common facilities such as day care facilities, senior or teen centers, cultural facilities	
2	Common area is provided at a minimum of 200 square feet per unit consisting of tables, benches, and shade provided by structures or landscaping	
2	Private open space is provided for each unit at a minimum of 6 feet by 8 feet in size	
3	15 percent of the units are no larger than 900 square feet	
2	10 percent of the units are one bedroom or studio units	
3	15% of units are very low or low income affordable; or 20% of units are moderate income affordable; or 30% of units are middle income affordable	
1	Parking is placed in below grade structures, individual garage structures, or behind buildings.	
1	All buildings with street frontage shall face the street with visible entrances.	
1	Creates a continuation of the existing neighborhood. Development provides a series of through street connections within the site that connect to other through streets in the surrounding area.	
1	All new streets are the minimum allowable width	
1	Solar access considered in the site design (quantify – Templeton, countywide design)	
1	Site design maximizes solar access to all buildings.	
1	Exceeds California Energy Code by at least 20%	
1	All landscaping is irrigated through drip irrigation.	
1	All pedestrian walkways are landscaped and illuminated with pedestrian scaled elements.	
<b>TOTAL</b>		

**All projects within the Commercial Retail or Office/Professional land use categories must incorporate project characteristics in order to achieve at least 15 points.**

<i>Possible Points</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Points Earned</i>
2	Located within a CBD	
1	Located within 1,000 feet of a CBD	
2	Project is within ¼ mile walking distance of any of the following: food/convenience store, retail/services, schools, daycare, recreation centers	
1	Project is located within ¼ mile walking distance of an existing transit stop or proposes a transit stop	
3	Density is greater than or equal to 10 units per acre	
1	Density is greater than or equal to 7 units per acre	
3	15 percent of the units are no larger than 900 square feet	
2	10 percent of the units are one bedroom or studio units	
2	Provides common facilities such as day care facilities, senior or teen centers, cultural facilities	
2	Common area is provided at a minimum of 200 square feet per unit consisting of tables, benches, and shade provided by structures or landscaping	
2	Private open space is provided for each unit at a minimum of 6 feet by 8 feet in size	
2	10% are live / work units	
3	15% of units are very low or low income affordable; or 20% of units are moderate income affordable; or 30% of units are middle income affordable	
1	Parking is placed in below grade structures, individual garage structures, or behind buildings.	
1	All buildings with street frontage shall face the street with visible entrances.	
1	Creates a continuation of the existing neighborhood. Development provides a series of through street connections within the site that connect to other through streets in the surrounding area.	
1	All new streets are the minimum allowable width	
1	Site design maximizes solar access to all buildings.	
1	Exceeds California Energy Code by at least 20%	
1	All landscaping is irrigated through drip irrigation.	
1	All pedestrian walkways are landscaped and illuminated with pedestrian scaled elements.	
<b>TOTAL</b>		